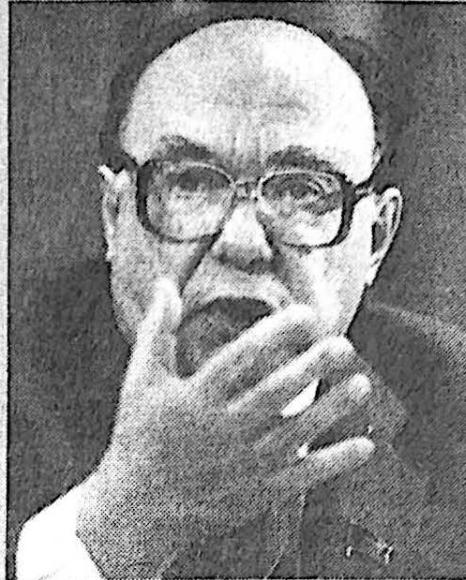


THE LEADING AND GUIDING FORCE OF
Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organizations and public organizations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The C.P.S.U. exists for the people and serves the people.

The Communist Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, determines the general perspectives of the development of society and the course of the domestic and foreign policy of the U.S.S.R., directs the great constructive work of the Soviet people, and imparts a planned, systematic and theoretically substantiated character to their struggle for the victory of Communism.

All party organizations shall function within the framework of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R.

ARTICLE 6 OF THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION Repudiated by the Communist Party leadership



Associated Press

"Society itself will decide whether it wishes to adopt our politics."

ALEKSANDR N. YAKOVLEV

Member of the Politburo
and a chief architect of Gorbachev
proposals for a new Government

Caution: The Soviet Party Is Not Over

By BILL KELLER

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Feb. 7 — East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania — and now the Soviet Union?

As the Communist Party's leadership grudgingly accepted the prospect of political competition to-

day, it was tempting to think that another Communist sand castle was about to disappear in a flash flood of democracy.

But it is hard to find anyone here, Communist or anti-Communist, who really believes the party is over.

True, the Soviet Communist Party is rapidly polarizing into the camps of revision and resistance. More and more, it is torn by ethnic divisions, paralyzed by its diminishing authority

and beset by a public disenchanted not just by 70 years of admitted misrule, but also by five years of unfulfilled promises.

But for several reasons, the party here seems likely to prove more tenacious than its offspring in Eastern Europe.

Red Roots Run Deep

In contrast to the overnight democracies of Eastern Europe is the Soviet Union, in which the Communist Party has deeper roots, a fractured opposition and the strategic prowess of President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

The roots of Communism run into the national psychology and the system of power.

Bolshevism was indigenous rather than imposed by an imperious neighbor, and it has been reinforced by

seven decades of indoctrination and methodical extermination of dissent. In the older generation, Communism is intertwined with the patriotic emotions of World War II and the building of an industrial state.

Moreover, every factory boss, collective farm director, newspaper editor, high school principal, K.G.B. colonel and army officer owes his place in large part to the party's pervasive patronage machine.

Mr. Gorbachev has tried for two years to wean factories and farms from directives of local party bosses. He has discovered that many of them lost the habit of deciding things for themselves.

If the time does come to compete, the party starts with the advantages of a rich political infrastructure, from bank accounts and printing presses to tactical experience and personnel files.

When a group of Communist insurgents met recently in Moscow to consider organizing their own party, one leader, Sergei B. Stankevich, said it would be better to work from within.

"We are not going to walk away from the party with empty hands and bare bottoms," he said.

Although discontent with the party

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The Party Is Not Over For Soviet Communism

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runs deep, there is no sense of solidarity among the opposition.

The Soviet Union is an assembly of self-absorbed factions, each with its own grievances — ethnic, economic, ideological. There is no unifying force comparable to the nationalism of Germans or the Catholic Church in Poland, no cohesive umbrella group comparable to the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia.

When 100,000 people massed in the center of Moscow on Sunday to press the Communist leadership for change, the show of common purpose seemed reminiscent of scenes in Prague or Leipzig. But in the ranks, the crowd lacked any unifying passion or sense of its own power.

It was a one-day alliance of convenience, the blue and yellow flag of Ukrainian nationalists flying alongside the black flag of the anarchists, Jews fearful of mounting anti-Semitism marching with young Communists demanding intra-party democracy.

The Baltic republics, waging an aloof campaign for liberty, find little common purpose with the Armenians and Azerbaijanis, living in their own world of murderous recriminations. And none of those places wants to tie its fate to Russia, the largest republic, which is itself split into regions as disparate as separate countries.

Mr. Gorbachev's main enemy is not any political rival inside the party or outside it. It is chaos, disintegration.

"We depend on Gorbachev because this country cannot be Czechoslovakia," said one marcher in the parade Sunday, alluding wistfully to the orderly change of power in Prague. "The most we can hope for is to be Romania, and there has already been enough blood."

A Nation Sick of Parties

Another reason the party can expect to be around awhile is the lack of a political culture here.

Even in the Baltics, the most European of the Soviet republics, organizers of newly legalized parties like the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats say many people are reluctant to join any party, because they are alienated by the concept of organized politics.

"The habit of democracy has been bred out of us," said a leader of the new Social Democratic Party in Lithuania.

In Russia and Central Asia, even more remote from the law-based democratic traditions of Europe, political groups splinter as soon as they are formed.

Svyatoslav Fyodorov, a Moscow eye surgeon and champion of free enterprise who attended the party meeting, said another major obstacle is that politics must be based on economic interests, but so far the economy is a state monopoly.

He predicted that innumerable small and ineffectual parties would spring up quickly, but that serious contenders for power would come only when the current economic arrangements change.

"We are children, because the Russian people have never had any property," he said.

"Parties will be revived in parallel with people acquiring new forms of property," he said. "Peasants will get land as their own, and establish their own party."

Don't Underestimate Gorbachev

Another reason not to write off the party yet is its leader, Mr. Gorbachev, who may yet succeed in making Communism a capable competitor in a multiparty world.

Today, Mr. Gorbachev's first priority is to create stable government institutions — the Parliament, a more powerful presidency, soon-to-be-

The Communists have big advantages; not so their rivals.

elected local governments — that have enough public credibility to stand on their own and govern.

Gradually, Mr. Gorbachev and his party have accepted that the price of credible democracy is forcing the Communists to stand the test of competition.

The early experience of the Baltic republics, where the Communists have already begun to face competition, suggests that even if the party remakes itself almost beyond recognition it will have trouble holding its own.

But Mr. Gorbachev insists the party can be taught the new tricks of democracy.

"I think that we can," said Gennadi I. Gerasimov, the main Soviet spokesman. "Gorbachev certainly believes that we can. But we must move with the tide, must move with the people, and not be left behind by events."

"There are countries where one party may stay in power for years," he added. "In Sweden, Social Democrats were for how many — 20? 25? Why? Because they were good enough to keep the power. So his hope is that his party will be in power for 20 or 30 more years."

New Chief for the Navy

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 7 (AP) — President Bush will nominate Adm. Frank B. Kelso 2d to be the new Chief of Naval Operations, the White House announced today in San Francisco, where the President was traveling. Admiral Kelso, now commander in chief of the Navy's Atlantic Command and supreme Allied commander for the Atlantic, would succeed Adm. Carlisle A. H. Trost, whose term expires June 30. Admiral Kelso is 56 years old, a native of Fayetteville, Tenn., and a 1956 graduate of the Naval Academy.